



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Fire Island National Seashore News Release

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Work to Begin on Fire Island National Seashore's West Entrance Facilities

Patchogue, NY— The National Park Service (NPS) announced today that construction will begin around December 26, 2006, on a scaled- down version of Fire Island National Seashore's new West Entrance Station. The work is expected to be completed by mid- February, followed by a separate paving project which is expected to begin by April 2007.

For the West Entrance Station project, a public meeting and 45- day period of public review of the Environmental Assessment for the project concluded on January 31, 2006. According to park superintendent, Mike Reynolds, the scope of the project changed significantly after considering feedback from stakeholders and analyzing park operational efficiencies. The resultant "Alternative B – Modified" represents a simplified plan involving the replacement of the existing entrance gate at its current location, the placement of a 600- square- foot open pavilion in the approximate location of the originally proposed building, and the provision of a drop- off area and vault toilets. "These modifications are considered positive changes that are responsive to the concerns expressed during the public comment period, while providing a positive visitor entrance experience," stated Reynolds. The resulting facility will be a much less costly and a more sustainable structure, including solar energy panels.

During the construction, most public access to the Fire Island Lighthouse will not be affected. The service road to the lighthouse and the Fire Island communities is expected to be closed or rerouted at times, but project managers anticipate that construction of the simplified structure will proceed smoothly. Road work and paving will be undertaken in stages that will cause minimum impact to visitors and resources. A major fall hawk migration monitoring program is conducted every year near the site selected for the pavilion. Construction work has been timed to avoid conflict with migrating birds and other wildlife.

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The project site is located at the westernmost entrance to the national seashore and the Fire Island Lighthouse, just east of Robert Moses State Park. “Alternative B—Modified” entails the construction of a small open-air interpretive shelter and limited seasonal restroom facilities, and the installation of a more efficient sign and entry gate system. Vehicular access beyond this point is regulated.

The primary purpose of this project is to provide an initial point of information and contact for visitors and residents of the western Fire Island communities, and to provide a vehicle checkpoint station which safely controls access to Fire Island National Seashore lands. A secondary purpose of the project is to provide an area to help educate the general public about Fire Island National Seashore. Improvements at this site include a safe drop-off location for pedestrian access to the Fire Island Lighthouse, beach and western communities.

As part of the National Park Service’s procedures to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act, the draft [Environmental Assessment](#) for the project was made available for public review. (See [Press Release 05-16](#)) The 88-page document is available on Fire Island National Seashore’s website, along with the Finding of No Significant Impact ([FONSI](#)) and Statement of Findings (SOF) for Floodplains and Wetlands, which were released on May 26, 2006 in support of Alternative B—Modified. “Clearly, the Preferred Alternative offers the greatest benefit with the least environmental effect,” stated Supt. Reynolds. “The National Park Service is please to see this project begin.”

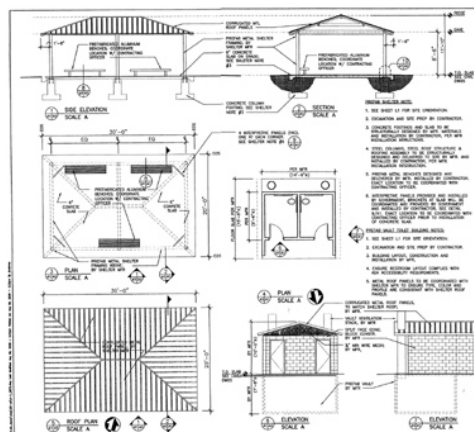
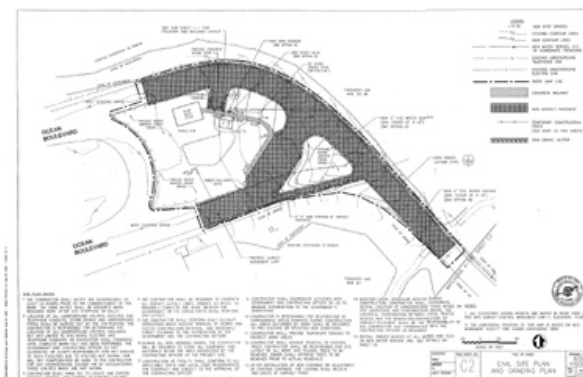
During the planning process, a minor boundary revision was required. The property selected as the most appropriate site for the West End Entrance Station has been legally transferred from the State of New York to the National Park Service.

Fire Island National Seashore’s interpretation and education staff designed wayside panels to focus on the rich cultural history and natural resources of this site. In addition to providing a view of the current Fire Island Lighthouse, which was completed in 1858, the new West Entrance Facility is near the site of the former Fire Island Life-Saving Service Station.

Migratory birds, butterflies and dragonflies are often seen from this location, so interpretive panels help explain the value of the natural resources on Fire Island. Fire Island Raptor Enumerator (FIRE) president Drew Panko stated that the site is unique in that it is a great place for observing large numbers of falcon. Falcons are bird-hunting hawks that are not afraid of water. Their numbers may be an indicator of the abundance of other migrating birds along the coast. With some of these bird species traveling from Canada to South America, annual bird migration provides a snapshot of the health of the ecosystem on a larger scale.

For more information about Fire Island National Seashore, visit the park’s web site at www.nps.gov/fiis.

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Alternative B – Modified incorporates a smaller open-sided interpretive shelter, which is expected to have less impact on migrating birds and will be more cost-effective to maintain.



Fire Island National Seashore's new west entrance facility will be installed in the vicinity of the current hawk watching platform used by the Fire Island Raptor Enumerators.

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